



62d Chemical Company Training

By Private First Class Jarrett M. Branch

Outlaws Take Foxes for a Ride

A sense of determination filled the air at Yakima Training Center, Yakima, Washington, as the “Outlaws” from the 62d Chemical Company, 23d Chemical Battalion, donned their “battle rattle.” The purpose of the day’s mission was strictly to train, but the Soldiers seemed to be preparing for actual battle. According to the acting platoon sergeant, 1st Platoon, they must be prepared for any situation, given that their duties vary from identifying possible chemical threats to providing protection during convoy operations.

Before training began, the Soldiers carefully inspected M93A1 Fox Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Reconnaissance System vehicles. They understand that failure to properly conduct preventive maintenance checks and services on the vehicles—especially before entering a contaminated environment—could cost them their lives.

Once the crews finished the inspections, they received instructions regarding the training mission. The platoon sergeant explained that the objective was to react to contact and send an assault team to clear a building. He also explained how the situation should be handled.

After the briefing, Soldiers performed several dry runs without using the Fox vehicles. However, they conducted the drills just as if they were inside the “made for combat” vehicles. Finally, the crews mounted the Foxes and prepared for the second stage of training. As the convoy moved along the trails of the arid Yakima plains toward the training site, only a haze of dust was left behind.

The convoy continued until one of the rear gunners informed his crew of enemy contact. At that point, crews conducted defensive maneuvers and positioned themselves in response to enemy fire. Gunners then laid suppressive fire; and the assault team made its way to the building, where team members cleared a room before heading back to the vehicles.


Because successful training is the key to successful missions, the drill was repeated a number of times. According to a sergeant from the 62d, practice is just as important as the mission because quality training leads to quality Soldiers. “[Quality training] creates Soldiers who are best suited for combat,” he said.

Ready at All Times

In the ever-changing face of modern warfare, improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and convoy strikes are becoming the main methods of enemy attack. Therefore, it is essential that all Soldiers—regardless of their jobs—are trained and proficient in every aspect of convoy operations. Soldiers of the 62d Chemical Company, 23d Chemical Battalion, honed their convoy skills during a three-day, live-fire convoy exercise held at Yakima Training Center, 6–8 June 2009.

According to a captain with the 62d, every Soldier—regardless of military occupational specialty—must be a convoy expert because most contact with the enemy takes place on roadways during convoy operations and because “Everyone’s on the road—everyone’s moving.” And he has firsthand knowledge of the importance of this training because he was part of a convoy that was struck by an IED in Afghanistan. The training he had received helped him overcome the hectic situation.

In preparation for the actual, live-fire exercise, the platoons performed several dry- and blank-fire runs. During these and the live-fire runs, the five-vehicle convoy encountered a number of combat situations. In one scenario, the convoy was struck by an IED. As a result, the convoy assumed a defensive position so that the medical team could begin treating injured personnel. In another scenario, one of the vehicles became disabled. A captain from the 62d explained that “One of their vehicles will become disabled, and the platoon will have to maneuver its gun trucks to support by fire as the recovery vehicle comes in and recovers the disabled vehicle.”

The Soldiers of the 62d Chemical Company recognize the importance of reacting instinctively when a convoy encounters trouble. “It’s important to build on skills that we might possibly use in the future,” said the platoon sergeant of the 2d Platoon, 62d Chemical Company. “We have a lot of nonstandard missions for nonstandard situations, so we must be ready [for convoy operations] at all times.” 

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